

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1016

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UR, LA

SUBJ: LAO NEUTRALIST PARTY REPRESENTATIVES VISIT USSR

1. A RECENT ISSUE OF SAY KANG NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCED THAT TIAO (PRINCE)HSIHARATH PHASOUK AND VONGSAVANH BOUTSAVATH, LEADERS OF THE LAO NEUTRALIST PARTY (LNP), ARE VISITING THE USSR FOR TWO WEEKS. ARTICLE QUOTES SIHARATH AS SAYING THE SOVIET GOVZRNMENT HAD OFFICIALLY INVITED HIM TO VISIT THE USSR. HE REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT HE EXPECTED TO ENGAGE IN AN EX-CHANGE OF POLITICAL VIEWS, WHICH HE HOPED WOULD STRENGTHEN LAO-SOVIET UNDERSTANDING.

2. SIHARATH AND VONGSAVANH ARE YOUNG LAO POLITICIANS WITH STRONG "NEUTRALIST" CREDENTIALS; THE FORMER IS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LNP, WHILE THE LATTER IS A MEMBER OF THE LNP'S POLITICAL COMMITTEE. THEY ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED (APRIL 1974) JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL (JNPC). SIHARATH IS CARRIED ON JNPC ROLLS AS A MEMBER OF THE VIENTIANE SIDE. (COMMENT: HE IS ALSO NOTED FOR BEING AN OPPORTUNIST AND HAS SPENT A GOOD DEAL OF TIME IN RECENT MONTHS PUBLICIZING THE JNPC'S 18 POINTS, O AS DESIRED BY JNPC PRESIDENT PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG,

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DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE 18 POINTS HAVE YET TO BE

AGREED UPON OR APPROVED BY THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION. END COMMENT.) SIHARATH IS A NEPHEW OF PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA, WHO IS TECHNICALLY THE HEAD OF THE LNP.

3. HVONGSAVANH IS A LONG-TIME EMPLOYEE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AFFAIRS; HE IS CLASSIFIED AS A "QUALIFIED NEUTRALIST" IN THE JNPC. HE SERVED AS NEUTRALIST DIRECTOR OF COMMERCE IN THE KHANG KHAY GOVERNMENT IN 1961-62 AND REPORTEDLY STUDIED IN THE SOVIET UNION IN THE EARLY 1960S.

4. COMMENT: WE ASSUME THAT THERE MAY BE AN ASSOCIATION (AT LEAST IN THE MINDS OF THE SOVIETS) BETWEEN THE TRAVEL OF THESE TWO YOUNG NEUTRALISTS AND THE RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW BY VIENTIANE SIDE MINISTER OF INTERIOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN, WHO WAS FORMERLY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE LNP. PHENG HAS IMPECABLE NEUTRALIST CREDENTIALS AND LOOMS AS A POSSIBLE COMPROMISE CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER SHOULD SOUVANNA DEPART FROM THE LAO POLITICAL SCENE. IT APPEARS THAT THE SOVIETS MAY BE CULTIVATING LAO NEUTRALISTS WITH AN EYE TO FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS HERE.
WHITEHOUSE

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